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From Past to Present.
Studies in Memory of
Manfred O. Korfmann

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From Past to Present. Studies in Memory of Manfred O. Korfmann

Manfred O. Korfmann

26. April 1942 – 11. August 2005

Contents

›Ritual‹ and ›Social‹ Elements in Prehistoric Burial Custom: Some General Reflections and a Case Study

Ulrich Veit

In January 2016 I had – for the first time since I left Tübingen University in 2010 – the opportunity to come back to *Schloss Hohentübingen*, where I had worked door by door with Manfred Korfmann from 1993 till his much too early death. I had been invited to present a paper on an International Workshop on the topic ›Ritual and Society: Burials as an integral part of social interaction‹ organized by Markus Dürr. My thoughts and feelings in those two bright winter days clearly also were with Manfred Korfmann and the time we shared in those scholarly so inspiring years at Tübingen.[1] Therefore it seems appropriate to dedicate the paper that I presented on that occasion to him and to publish it in a slightly revised form in this commemorative publication.[2] This is enhanced by the fact that the commemoration of the dead is at the heart of the topic I had chosen for this presentation.

I.

At the time when I for the first time read the call for papers of the organizer of the workshop, it seemed to me like a kind of *déjà-vu*: Since when I started with my own PhD-Thesis on burials within settlements about thirty years ago I was puzzled by the same problems as those, dealt with in this short text.[3] Reflecting on the relationship between ritual and society in those days I began studying the works of Emile Durkheim and the French school of sociological thinking. Starting with his book on the *Elementary Forms of Religion* (Durkheim 1984) I soon discovered the works of contemporary authors like Richard Hertz, Arnold van Gennep, Marcel Mauss and also the works of their intellectual followers as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Victor Turner, Edmund Leach and Pierre Bourdieu.[4] Their ideas shaped my thinking on ritual and society during the following decades (see Veit 1996).

Unfortunately with this kind of interest I stood more or less alone at least within German Prehistoric Archaeology. Neither the implicit historicism of traditional archaeology nor more recent approaches towards a kind of archaeological social science, that celebrated the techniques of quantitative analysis, really showed much interest in this special kind of a qualitative cultural analysis of prehistoric societies. Traditional archaeology on the one hand mainly engaged in issues of source criticism, chronology and in a continuation of the old master narratives of archaeological culture history. More timely approaches on the other hand experimented with new technical means that for the first time made possible a serial analysis of large amounts of archaeological material. In such a context, that favoured a hard science version of archaeology, not much sensibility for problems of ritual and religion may be expected (see Veit 1988).

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[1]   Leaving Schloss Hohentübingen for his home in Ofterdingen in the afternoon he often ask me to join him, to give me a lift to my own home in Dusslingen not far away from the road to Ofterdingen. We used this time together for discussions not only of archaeological but also many other issues.

[2]   I would like to thank the editors of this volume for their kind invitation to participate in this commemorative project and Markus Dürr for his kind invitation to the 2016 workshop. – The lecture style of my presentation remained largely unchanged, but some basic references were added.

[3]   For the broader context see Dürr 2016.

[4]   E. g. Hertz 1907; van Gennep 1969; Leach 1978; Bourdieu 1979.

ARCHAEOLOGY OF RELIGION

Burial relics as archaeological
evidence for ritual and cult

Burial relics as
archaeological evidence
for reconstructing
the past/grave inventories
as a ›mirror of life‹

Burial relics as a special
kind of archaeological
evidence/graves as an
symbolic expression for
the relation between the
living and the dead

SOCIAL ARCHAEOLOGY   ARCHAEOLOGY OF DEATH

Fig. 1: Different perspectives on burial evidence.

Graves therefore in those days were not primarily analysed as ritual performances of social groups, but simply as sets of data, that could be used nearly mechanical to reconstruct social differentiation (fig. 1). The expense of the grave monument and the number and the supposed value of the goods deposited within the grave were taken as direct indications for the status group to which the dead belonged. Burial variability was analysed primarily as an indicator of social complexity (Steuer 1982; Sangmeister 1994).

This was not far away from contemporary discussions on an *Archaeology of Death* (Chapman/ Kinnes/Randsborg 1979) within the tradition of the *New Archaeology*. But different to the German tradition here additionally ethnographic evidence was included to formulate ›middle range theories‹, in the sense of generalizations able to bridge the gap between the static archaeological record and the dynamics of living culture.

This kind of reasoning in those days was criticised by Edmund Leach (1973; 1977) from the position of Social Anthropology. He remembered processual archaeologists that mainly dealt with problems of economics and socio-political differen-

tiation, that there also is a ritual dimension implicit in all burial evidence, which shouldn't be forgotten in our interpretations.

In my eyes this has been a very important point that added a new dimension to an *Archaeology of Death* as a field which up to the present occupies a central position within archaeological reasoning (fig. 2). This kind of debate in those years also made us familiar with the idea that rituals, especially burial rituals, not only reflect social distinctions, but in some way contribute to the constitution of society.[5]

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[5]   This idea nevertheless remained hard to communicate to an archaeological audience. When I gave a paper entitled ›The social construction of death in … ‹ (published: Veit 1992) on a conference the prominent scholar, that had the task to introduce my presentation, supposed that I expected talk about violent action. Only about twenty years later, in a private conversation, he begged pardon for this misunderstanding and admitted that he meanwhile had realised my silent reference to Berger and Luckmanns (1977) famous book on *The social construction of reality*.
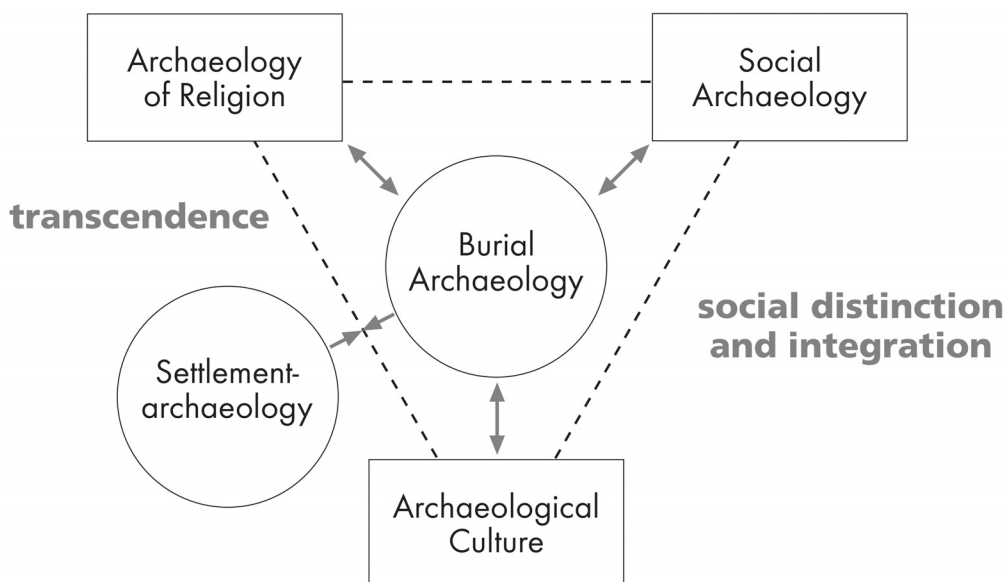
Fig. 2: Systematic position of ›Burial Archaeology‹ (›Archaeology of Death‹) among different archaeological spezialisations.

And the consequences of this kind of reasoning are not even today generally accepted in central European Prehistoric archaeology. Often the metaphor of material culture as a ›mirror‹ of past social organisation is still dominant in archaeological literature. And in the same way as the challenges of the *linguistic turn* in the 1980s largely were neglected in archaeology, today the challenges of the *material turn* (e. g. Wieser 2008) are not responded to in a proper way (see Veit 2014).

II.

This more general problem becomes obvious still from the title of the Tübingen workshop, which doesn't address the question of materiality directly. Its topic ›Ritual and Society: Burials as an integral part of social interaction‹ is formulated very wide and largely leaves open what kind of research problems ideally should be addressed in which way by the different contributors. This might have to do with the insight, that the problems dealt with here differ to a large extent with regard to the academic

discipline involved. Therefore I will try on the following pages to give a short answer to this question from the perspective of my own discipline, Prehistoric Archaeology.

But the answer will not only depend on the disciplinary context we work in. It will also depend on the meaning that is given to the concepts mentioned in the title: ›ritual‹ and ›society‹. ›Society‹ is a key concept of modern social archaeology and it would be no problem to devote a whole paper to it (see Veit 2013). As I will concentrate today more on ›ritual‹, I will mention here only two crucial points concerning ›society‹. First of all: In Prehistoric Archaeology we have to do not so much with ›societies‹ in a modern sense (*Gesellschaften*), but with ›communities‹ (*Gemeinschaften*). This makes it difficult to apply sociological concepts developed for the study of modern societies, as for example the concept of social stratification, directly to the prehistoric evidence. This becomes evident for example in recent discussions on the usefulness of concept Pierre Bourdieus ›habitus‹-concept (Schreg / Zerres / Pantermehl 2013; cf. Rehbein / Saalmann 2014).
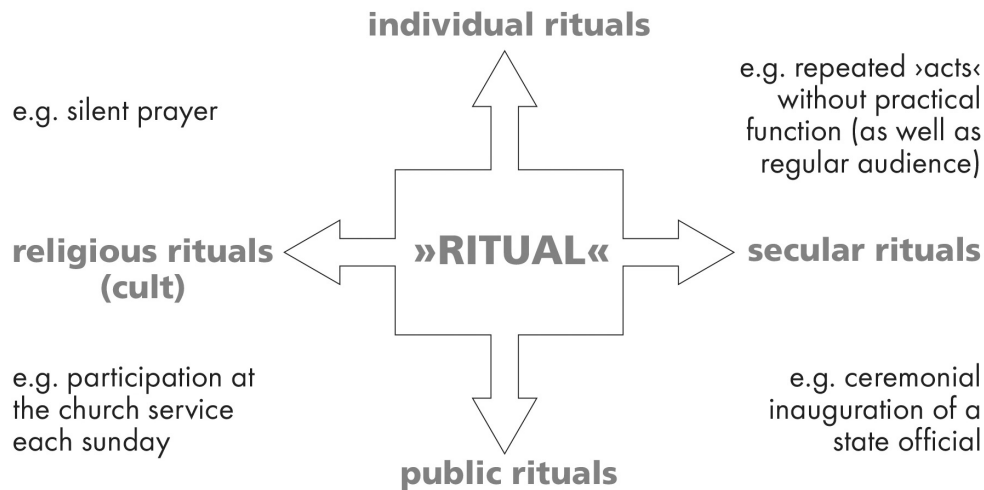
Fig. 3: Different types of rituals. Further types were ›periodical rituals‹ and ›rituals at special occasions‹ (as for example ›crisis rituals‹).

My second point concerns the associated term ›social structure‹, which is central within modern social archaeology since a couple of decades. But different to its common use within anthropology, in archeology the ethnological focus on kinship structures is missing here. ›Social structure‹ instead is used as a generic term for the description of sociopolitical differentiation within prehistoric societies. The concept therefore points to the identification of different ›status positions‹ (as e. g. ›elder‹, ›chief‹ or ›king‹) and ›social strata‹ – or at least to the detection of special ›elite groups‹ – in the archaeological record (e. g. Steuer 1982; Sangmeister 1994). In this context it regularly is assumed, that the respective ›structures‹ are of a certain duration that is normally thought to correspond to the duration of the underlying ›archaeological cultures‹. More processual perspectives of society, that emphasize the latent instability of sociocultural systems and the dynamics of the negotiation of meanings (see: Wimmer 2005), are still largely unknown in central European archaeology.

An important archaeological indicator for social differentiation and the existence of elite groups traditionally are burials with a large number of valuable grave goods, especially those including golden objects and those made of other rare and exotic ma-

terials. Curiously the same kind of evidence regularly is taken into consideration, when archaeologists talk about ›ritual‹ and ›religion‹. In this case golden and other exotic objects in graves are not primarily taken as a measure of property, but as an expression for a distinct religious symbolism, pointing to a kind of deification of the deceased.[6] The rare combination of both perspectives may be found in the hypothesis of Dirk Krauße, that the famous Late Hallstatt Age princely grave from Hochdorf (Baden-Württemberg, Germany) represents the burial of a sacred ruler (Krauße 1999; for a critique see Veit 2000). I will come back to this point later. But first of all we should have a quick look at the concepts ›ritual‹ and ›mortuary ritual‹.

III.

What has been said above with regard to ›culture‹ as a whole is also true with regard to ›ritual‹ as a field of archaeological research. While within the recent

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6   E. g. Kull 1997. For the details of my argument see also Veit, in print.

ethnological debate the performative character of rituals is stressed and ritual behaviour is portrayed as a kind of theatre that has a potential for bringing about social change (Rao 2007, 369), within archaeology too often ritual is presented as ›static‹ and ›conservative‹. According to Manfred Eggert (2015, 262) rituals and cult-actions stand for a type of behaviour that is standardised, bound to norms and repetitive. In this way their potential function is reduced to the confirmation of old rules and to the prevention of social change. This is far away from the idea, that rituals form an arena for the negation of social problems and therefore are a location for the rise of new forms of social organization.[7]

A further characteristic of this new perspective on ritual is the strong emphasis on ›framing‹. Only with the separation of ›ritual‹ and ›non-ritual‹ in society a special domain of action is created (Rao 2007, 369). And this domain is established independent of the old religious/non-religious-dichotomy. The ›framing‹ doesn't rest alone on the spatial and chronological separation of the ritual event and the marking and cleaning of its participants. It includes a conscious decision by the participants: ›This is ritual!‹

But, in which form are we confronted with ritual? Obviously there are many different types of ritual (fig. 3). The main distinctions are between public and individual rituals, and between religious and secular (or political) rituals. A further dimension is opened up by the distinction between periodical rituals and rituals at special occasions (as for example the so called ›crisis rituals‹).[8]

When we come to archaeology a further point is especially important. Archaeology is not directly concerned with rituals but with the material outcome of rituals. And it is not in every case easy to detect ritual action within the archaeological record. In some cases special kinds of ›tools‹ specially designed for ritual purposes (›Ritualgerät‹) may point to the execution rituals, but much more common is the use of everyday objects (Meyer/Zotter 2013). In these cases only the find context and conspicuous manipulations of certain objects deposited together with the deceased persons indicate a possible ritual context to the archaeologist. This is especially true for mortuary rituals (Veit 1988).

From an anthropological point of view mortuary rituals may be defined as specially framed social events, which took place at special occasions. Their central aim in dealing with the deceased is the negotiation and reconstruction of the cosmic and social order of the social group involved. Unfortunately such an anthropological definition in many cases does not correspond to what is really meant, when archaeologists use the term ›mortuary ritual‹ (*Bestattungsritual*). Here two other aspects, which in my opinion could better be expressed by other terms, are relevant: ›Mortuary ritual‹ is often equated either with the term ›mortuary custom‹ (*Bestattungssitte/Bestattungsbrauch*)[9] or simply with the term ›mortuary evidence‹ (*Bestattungsreste*).[10] For establishing an anthropological approach within archaeology both concepts seem inadequate. To grasp the essence of this kind of events therefore at least four dimensions have be taken into consideration (fig. 4):

First, mortuary rituals have to be regarded as rituals (in the proper sense of this word) insofar as a standard repertoire of predominantly symbolic actions is performed. At the same time they are social

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[7] For studies on the ancient world see for example Egon Flaig (1998, 258): ›Rituals carry latent tipping moments with them: instead of settling conflicts, they may build up a place at which the groups of a society make public and express their conflicts.‹ This is illustrated by Flaig by reference to the Roman *pompa funebris*, were noble families publicly presented the masks of their politically successful ancestors in a long parade.

[8] Arnold van Genneps (1960) famous ›rites of passage‹ lay somewhere in between these categories.

[9] ›Mortuary custom‹ focuses on historically specific ways of reacting on the death of a member of the reference group. They normally are thought to be passed on in form of cultural norms from one generation to the next.

[10] ›Mortuary evidence‹ normally refers to the presence of human skeletal remains that have been intentionally deposited. In a broader sense it designates all materials that relate to mortuary ritual and to the commemoration of the dead, without a distinction of ritual and non ritual aspects.
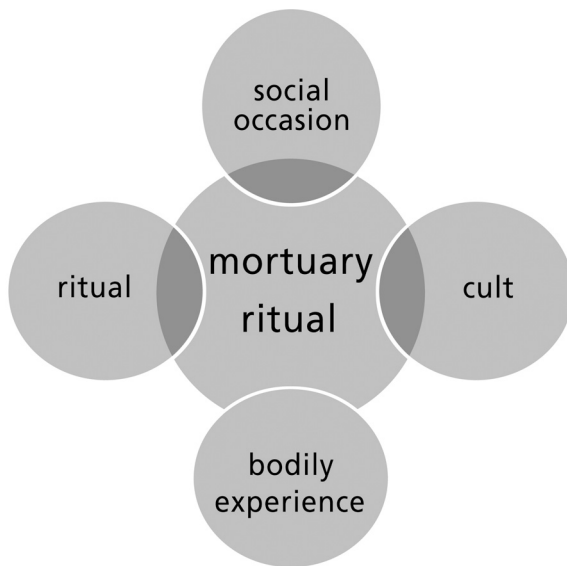
Fig. 4: Different dimensions of ›mortuary ritual‹: • Mortuary ritual (MR) as a social occasion composed of a number of ›meaningful‹ social actions, that are performed for a (more or less wide) audience. • MR as a ritual (in the proper sense of this word) insofar a standard repertoire of predominantly symbolic actions is performed by (some of) the persons that participate. • MR as a cult insofar as ›gods‹ or ›spiritual‹ beings are (regarded to be) involved. • MR as a psychic and bodily experience insofar as such an event provokes emotions and bodily reactions among the persons involved in it (grief vs. mourning).

occasions that are held for, and under participation, of a more or less large group of people. Furthermore mortuary rituals are cult practices insofar as gods or other spiritual beings are involved – or at least are regarded to be involved.[11] Finally, mortuary rituals are events which regularly not only provoke cultural but also biotic reactions among those people that participate. This special psychic and bodily experience is normally discussed by reference to the term ›grief‹, which stands in opposition to the term

›mourning‹. ›Grief‹ refers the innate (universal) reaction on the loss of a familiar person, ›mourning‹ refers to the culture specific rules of behaviour in the face of the death of a related person.[12]

IV.

Up to this point, my paper its focus on a anthropological terminology has been very abstract or ›theoretical‹. In the remaining pages I will try to demonstrate, how these abstract ideas may be applied to archaeological practice. For sake of simplicity I will focus on a single archaeological site: The well-known Early Iron Age ›princely tomb‹ form Eberdingen-Hochdorf (near Ludwigsburg, Baden-Württemberg, Germany), that the organizers of the Tübingen workshop wisely had chosen as a motive for the workshop-poster. It is my aim in this way to build up a bridge between purely theoretical contributions towards an ›archaeology of ritual and society‹ and publications that don't care about theory building at all but are restricted to the presentation *ad hoc* interpretations for archaeological objects.[13]

But let us first – for those, that are not so familiar with the site – recapitulate the archaeological observations and finds at Hochdorf.[14]

The site is spatially defined by a monumental burial mound with a diameter of about 60 m and diverse constructional elements including an outer circular demarcation from stone and timber and a special entrance construction, which seems to have been in use only during the ritual sequence preceding the final deposition of the dead and the erection of the mound. In the centre of that mound a rectangular

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[11]   Within anthropology therefore the term ›cult of the dead‹ is reserved, a concept which refers to customary beliefs and practices concerning death, the soul, ghost, spirits, and the after-life. – There is not enough space here to discuss the old question concerning the relation between religion and magic (Malinowski 1983) – an how both elements are present in mortuary ritual. Not all archaeologists see a significant difference between both concepts (Leroi-Gourhan 1981, 10).

[12]   Unfortunately this pair of terms has no equivalent in German, were ›*Trauer*‹ refers to both aspects.
[13]   The first category is reflected in Manfred Eggerts (2015) recent paper *Das Rituelle als erkenntnistheoretisches Problem der Archäologie*. A good example for the second kind of approach is Jörg Biel's (2009) paper *Das frühkeltische Fürstengrab von Eberdingen-Hochdorf. Eine Inszenierung*.
[14]   For an overview see Biel 1985. For more recent accounts with information on additional publications on Hochdorf see: Jung 2006; Biel 2009; Veit 2009.

Fig. 5: Reconstruction of the burial chamber in the Keltenmuseum Hochdorf (photo: S. Stork, Keltenmuseum Hochdorf/Enz).

burial chamber with an extension of 4,7 × 4,7 m had been erected. It has been protected by two large layers of stone.

The rich inventory of this chamber may be divided up into a number of find complexes (fig. 5): Against the west wall of the chamber stood a richly decorated bronze sofa (often addressed to as a greek ›Kline‹) on which the deceased itself had been placed lying on his back. The deceased was a male person of around forty years of age and impressive 1,87 m in height. He was fitted with a large number of objects of diverse categories and materials.[15] Some of them were made of gold or at least decorated with gold ornaments as for example his shoes.

The body itself had been wrapped in diverse layers of valuable textiles. At the feet of the dead, in the north-west corner of the chamber a huge bronze chauldron of Greek origin and probably filled with mead had been placed. On the top of it lay a small cup of pure gold.

The main feature of the eastern half of the burial chamber is the four-wheeled wagon. On the body of the wagon a collection of objects including a maple yoke harnessing pieces for two horses and the driver's goad or whip had been placed.

Additionally, there was a set of bronze bowls and dishes (also of Mediterranean origin) and a set of tools for the slaughtering of cattle. Against the southern wall of the chamber hung a series of nine drinking horns, one larger and more elaborately decorated than the rest.[16] Most of the objects – similar to the corpse – probably were wrapped in textiles before they were deposited in the chamber.

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[15] They include a conical hat made from birch bark, a textile garment, a large belt with gold buckle, pointed shoes covered with applications of gold, amber bead necklace, a twisted gold neck torc, two gold fibulae, a gold bracelet, a dagger decorated completely with gold rivets, a leather bag with three large fish-hooks, a horsehair fishing line and some toilet objects, two wooden combs and an iron razor, a popular quiver with fourteen bronze and iron arrowheads.

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[16] The last one was made of iron, while the others were made from aurochs horns.

V.

What do we make from these observations with regard to Iron Age ›ritual‹ and ›society‹? The positions published so far clearly show that the Hochdorf-inventory may be regarded from quite different angles. Nevertheless most authors in their interpretations lay the emphasis on ›society‹ and ›everyday life‹, while only few stress ›ritual‹ or even ›cult‹ as central elements. Instead ›ritual‹ in most cases is regarded as a kind of epiphenomenon, not relevant for a sociological interpretation of the archaeological evidence. In fact ritual behaviour is a precondition of this kind of conclusions, since without such a kind of burial depositions the common form of social archaeology would be impossible.

Due to a lack of space I'm not able to discuss here the possible meaning of single objects or groups of objects form the inventory nor special observations on their use in burial context for an overall interpretation of the site in detail (but see Veit 1988; 2000; 2009). Instead it must be sufficient to recapitulate some of the dominant modes of interpretations concerning Hochdorf and comparable sites.

On a basic level the Hochdorf archaeological complex can be seen as a social event that refers to a number of similar events. Taken together, this ›series of events‹ represents a special type of ›burial‹ which can be distinguished from other contemporary forms of burial. In this sense different ›social statuses‹ may be expected for the persons associated with those different inventory-types. Normally a distinction is made according to the relative richness of the respective inventories (or inventory groups), referring to the number of artefacts, the number of artefact categories and to the material and aesthetic quality of the artefacts.

Apart from this, the most elaborate monuments and inventories may be taken as an index of the technical abilities of the period and the economic potential of the unknown organizers of the event.[17] It is important to add here, that the underlying social

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17   Both figures give only an indication for the minimum that was possible, since we have no evidence whether the collective potential was realized in the special case under discussion.

processes which may have produced this kind of pattern are largely irrelevant for this kind of argument. It is sufficient that the identifiable formal differences in expense are taken as an indication for a vertical differentiation between different ›individuals‹ as well as between different ›archaeological cultures‹. For methodological reasons the identification of horizontal social differences is largely impossible in such a theoretical context. It is dependent a *a priori* association of different parts of the inventory with different levels of social reality like kinship or politics.

A different epistemological status is associated with the widespread interpretation of the Hochdorf complex as a ›princely‹ or ›dynastic burial‹ (›*Fürstengrab*‹ respective ›*Adelsgrab*‹: see for example Biel 1985; Kimmig 1969; Krauße 1996) – and its understanding as a typical representation of the elites of the postulated stratified pre-state societies. This interpretation of the archaeological evidence rests on a general comparative analogy: Examples for historically distant situations (in this case form early respective high medieval times) are taken as a kind of model for the ›explanation‹ of the archaeological evidence. But different interpretations (or analogies) as for example the idea of a ›chieftains tomb‹ (*Häuptlingsgrab*) are equally possible. Only a carefully comparative analysis could establish a priority for one of these options. But unfortunately such analyses are still missing. For that reason the use of these terms in this context in most cases is not more than an indication of the theoretical affiliation of the respective author to a ›culture-historical‹ or a ›neo-evolutionary‹ frame of reference.

Scholars like Georg Kossack (1974) still early have criticized the princely grave-concept, especially the related idea of a ›dynastic‹ social structure underlying these kinds of grave monuments and inventories. This was thought to be in conflict with the spatial and chronological distribution pattern of this kind of graves. Instead for Kossack these graves exemplify a distinctive cultural – or perhaps better: behavioural – reaction to situations of intensified culture contact and acculturation. Therefore the term ›*Fürstengrab*‹ for him should be replaced by the less evocative term ›*Prunkgrab*‹ (with ›*Prunk*‹ for ›pomp‹ or ›splendour‹). This could be a valuable step to a more reflexive form of reasoning within Archaeology (Veit 2005). Unfortunately in more re-

cent times both terms tend again to be used more or less synonymous, which clearly is a drawback for the debate.[18]

The positions mentioned so far took observations from the archaeological record as an indication for some otherwise invisible behavioral, social or cultural facts. What the things themselves meant to the Iron Age actors has not been of interest in these debates. Our interpretations change when we refine our perspective and ask for the concrete cultural meaning, the grave inventory had for the organizers and the participants of the ceremonies.

A common idea in this context is, that the grave inventory contained messages that were directed and understandable for the participants. If this were the case we have to discuss the question whether these messages were simple or complex – and what they were about (e. g. social life or religious ideas). In recent scholarly discussions there is a clear preference to assume simple social instead of more complex cultural messages behind this sort of ritual behaviour. Often ritual is regarded simply as propaganda: as a political demonstration of the status of the family/kin group of the deceased, that is intended to stabilize and improve his position within society (Krauße 1996, 349).

Quite a different position has been sketched out for example by Manfred Eggert at several occasions (see Eggert 2010 and 2015 with further references). Eggert agrees that symbolic communication in form of encoded cultural messages has been at work in sites like Hochdorf. But different to the participants in the rituals, who were able to send and decode these messages, the archaeologist as a distant observer in Eggert's view is not as able to understand them. He simply is not in possession of the necessary specific cultural code: The messages encoded in mortuary ritual are regarded as far too complex to be simply read off from the fragmentary archaeological record (Eggert 2015, 273).

From the perspective of archaeological source criticism this argument sounds quite convincing.

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[18] For different perspectives: v. Carnap-Bornheim/ Krauße/Wesse 2006. For a more anthropological approach to this phenomenon see: Kümmel/Schweizer/ Veit 2008.

And many other archaeologists indeed argue in a quite similar way. But most of them seem in comparison with Eggert's radical position to be in general somewhat more optimistic about our interpretative possibilities archaeologists – a position that in turn easily could be classified as naive. For that reason I will not enter in this old debate here. In my opinion it cannot be solved by theoretical arguments alone but only by practical engagement with specific interpretive problems.

Neverthess Eggerts semiotic position may be challenged from a more anthropological point of view. One might argue that the supposed social ›messages‹ encoded in the prehistoric burial rituals may have not even been understandable for the participants in the rituals themselves – simply because this kind of rituals – apart from putting the participants under the ban – did not convey any messages at all. As a religious ritual, these events clearly possessed very strong expressive or performative qualities. But they very probably had no direct communicative function in the form that specific social messages were encoded, transmitted and decoded. According to Paul Veyne (1995, 330) this is typical for all kinds of public ceremonies and associated ›ceremonial monuments‹. Their function is twofold: They do not speak directly to the persons present in the ceremony, but only express themselves in a ceremonial form before them. On the other hand the monument itself conserves the glory of the deceased and in this way perpetuates his memory.

The social processes involved in this form of ceremonial behaviour perhaps may be illustrated by an example: The funeral held for William I. in March 1888 in Berlin, who died as a guarantor of a good order and a nearly sacred person and later on became the centre of cultic worship. Susanne Hauser (1996, 362) comments the large public procession held on this occasion at the centre of Berlin as follows: ›The communication, that takes place in the situation described, is the communication of those present with themselves. They are at the same time sender and receiver of all signs, in which they assure themselves of the collective emotions and attitudes and of the continued existence of their order. It is not necessary, that all participants know the signs around them and are able to decode them. It is not even necessary that they agree with what happens

and that they support the order that is put on stage in the ceremony. Participation alone – and be it as a spectator – is enough to become a part of the production.' And she adds: ›Who is able to keep such a demonstration of collective emotions and social order free from disturbance may not have the political power but doubtless he has the power to define the event that is put on stage.‹

Despite all differences with regard to the societies involved in both cases, much the same can be said of the organizers of the Hochdorf ritual event. These persons at least must have had the power to define this large event. How and on what kind of ›economic basis‹ their power rested is a quite different question, that could not be answered by reference to this kind of ceremonial evidence alone. If we want to say something about this dimension, it is necessary that we learn something about the way the potential political leaders, commemorated in death, interacted with other people in an everyday context.

It is not unusual in ethnological and historical context that political and religious leader worked hand in hand with the ›normal‹ people. On the other hand in sacred kingdoms the ›sacral king‹ himself may have been isolated to a large degree – and at the same time in terms of his political influence relative powerless. In these cases the real power may have been in the hands of a small number of persons from his suite at the princely court.

In any case it is a fallacy to believe that the Hochdorf-inventory might offer us a direct insight into Iron Age social structure. Instead, we are confronted here with a highly ritualized ceremonial context that to a large degree evades a conventional ›reading‹ with regard to social rank. The metaphor of the ›grave as a mirror of life‹ is not appropriate in such a context. More likely we are confronted here with a special form of (material) ›narrative‹. This idea is similar to Svend Hansen's (2002, 168) interpretation of the phenomenon of ›over equipment‹ (*Überausstattung*) as a special form of communication.[19] According to Hansen, these kinds of observation are not very helpful for defining the ›social

rank‹ of the deceased in relation to other deceased. But they may help us to identify social ideals of those pre- and protohistoric elites responsible for the formation of these collections.

VI.

Coming back to one of the central questions raised above, one could finally ask whether, what we can see in the Hochdorf-case, is a the result of a primarily ›religious‹ or a primarily ›secular‹ form of ritual. In my opinion the answer to this question must be: both. During such a complex ritual process as documented here certainly both, the social and the cosmic order, were negotiated and renewed. And different to modern western society, within these early cultures the deceased certainly remained an integral and influential part of society. For this reason I am skeptical about all interpretations which disregard the ›religious dimension‹ of sites like Hochdorf as epiphenomenal.

In my opinion archaeological evidence of burial rites in the future should no longer be considered only in relation to such modernist concepts as ›social structure‹ and ›social differentiation‹. Instead alternative concepts like Thomas Luckmann's (1991) ›invisible religion‹ or Jan and Aleida Assmann's ›cultural memory‹ (J. Assmann 1992; 1994; A. Assmann 1996) also have to be taken into account, to get an idea about what really happened there. This is not to reaffirm the old primitive-modern dichotomy. In contrary in studying ritual, we clearly have to be aware of the challenges formulated by a Symmetrical Anthropology (*We have never been modern* – Bruno Latour), ideas that so far were neglected to a large degree within central European Prehistoric Archaeology. But a discussion of this issue would open up quite another topic (see Veit 2018).

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[19] ›Over equipment‹ refers to graves in which the deceased potentially has more weapons at his disposal that one man is able to use at one moment.

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